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DEPOPULATING BIG CITIES.

"Unless an era of sanity dawns on the metropolitan world," says the Sandusky Register, "boards of trade and chambers of commerce will be organized to keep people away from our great cities instead of trying to induce them to come in. Unless we apply to people the same philosophy of values to which we subject the products of their toil and the gifts of nature, this country will some day witness a national organization to depopulate the cities, and the process of doing so will become a function of government."

"The era of industrialism requires great centers of population, but it is folly for them to overwork themselves in the direction of numbers only. There is no real distinction in being the "sixth city", or any other city whose title denotes merely population. There is far more honor in being a city of the wisely governed, prosperous, contented community of moderate size than in boasting relationship with a metropolis whose ignorance and egotism lead to a false pride of the many."

This is an admirable statement of a civic truth that ought to be spread from one end of the country to the other. There is no more unfortunate tendency in American life than the growth of cities already big to proportions that make them unwieldy and inefficient as business organisms and undesirable as places of residence. The civic patriotism that impels citizens of a small town to develop it to a size that will insure the co-operative advantages of a larger community may become mistaken and pernicious zeal when the city has grown sufficiently for that purpose."

There is no real advantage in a "mushroom city" except to speculators. The curse of our big cities is that they are never finished, never properly organized to perform a city's functions. If mere numbers were a true criterion, China would be a better country than the United States to live and work in, and New York's East Side would be superior to Detroit, San Francisco, Denver, Richmond or Bisbee.

The depopulation of overgrown cities, though it may never become a governmental function, as the Register suggests, has in reality already begun. The "back to the soil" movement is a part of it. The American people, even though they have not yet stopped hurrahing for mere bigness, are coming to feel that the country, or the town of moderate size, is far more wholesome for them and their children than the metropolis. And this tendency increases fast as transportation and invention bring the world to every man's door, and make it possible for any home in any town to become a center of civilization.

The "advantages" of the big city, once real, are now largely imaginary. Railroads, trolley lines, macadamized roads, automobiles and universal mail delivery have woven city and country together. There are few rural dwellers now who cannot get to "town" easily and quickly. And that town, even though it number only a few thousand souls, if it is prosperous and wide-awake, provides them with nearly all facilities for business, education and recreation that they would find in New York or Chicago.

The big buildings, the bustle and roar are missing, also the dirt, smoke, struggle and vice, but the fundamentals are there. Even the village has its Broadway theaters and its Metropolitan Opera House. Moving pictures, which have become the people's drama the world over, are as good in the prairie or mountain town as in the metropolis, and the phonograph provides nearly all the pleasurable sensations of fine opera except the consciousness of paying more than it's worth.

Inveterate "boosters" may long continue their frenzied scramble for more and more people, even when their cities have not yet digested their present population. But their activities should be restrained by a counter campaign of common sense. It is time to apply to our cities the modern doctrine of good farming—intensive cultivation.

We have entirely too many cities now of over 100,000 population. We need more 25,000 and 50,000 and 75,000 cities, which, as soon as they have attained prosperity and gained a civic competence, so to speak, shall deliberately set about perfecting themselves instead of growing aimlessly at the behest of real estate especulators. Better water supply, better paving, better sewers, better sidewalks, parks, public libraries, schools, museums, clubs for public service, good building laws, universal literacy, a low death rate, a spirit of community service and a reasoned civic pride—these are some of the things the really up-to-date American city prefers to mere unwieldy bulk.

OUR BRITISH SHIPPING TROUBLES.

Our difficulties with Great Britain arise chiefly from the fact that instead of establishing a close blockade of German ports, she maintains a loose, long-range blockade through the device of seizing vessels and cargoes wherever she finds them. And in doing so, she doesn't confine her seizures to ships trading with German ports, but includes the ports of neutral nations adjacent to Germany. That amounts, in effect to a blockade of the neutral ports, something not recognized in international law.

American shippers have complained particularly of the annoying delay to which their vessels have been subjected in British ports, and the difficulty of getting cases adjudicated promptly in the British prize courts. These, however, are largely matters of legal procedure which the British government seems to have been trying to remedy. The latest memorandum from London indicates a disposition to cut the red tape and treat the shippers and vessel owners more fairly.

Back of that, however, are the broad principles which our government has insisted on from the first, and which it must insist on, not only as the protector of our citizens' rights but as the chief custodian of international law at the time when the belligerents are shooting the law full of holes.

In a note to the British government Dec. 26, our state department declared: "This government is reluctantly forced to the conclusion that the present policy of His Majesty's government toward neutral ships and cargoes exceeds the manifest necessity of a belligerent, and constitutes restrictions upon the rights of American citizens on the high seas which are not justified by the rules of international law."

When Great Britain announced its blockade of Germany, our government protested, on March 30: "The Order in Council of the fifteenth of March would include, were its provisions to be actually carried into effect as they stand, a practical assertion of unlimited belligerent rights over neutral commerce within the whole European area, and an almost unqualified denial of the sovereign rights of the nations now at peace." We asked that there should be no interference with the general practice under which "innocent shipments may be freely transported to and from the United States through neutral countries without being subject to the penalties of contraband traffic of breach of blockade."

It is disappointing, then, to find in the labored, belated British response to our protest, no recognition of the principles we sought to maintain, and only the blunt statement that "His Majesty's government can scarcely admit that on the basis of actual facts any substantial grievance on the part of American citizens is justified or can be sustained."

We need not deny that in some respects Great Britain has behaved with liberality. She has not been harsh in the legitimate enforcement of her blockade laws. She has not destroyed any neutral property, and has not confiscated any contraband without paying for it. Above all, she has set an example of humanity to her enemies by refraining, under all circumstances, from taking the life of non-combatant enemies and neutrals at sea.

It is a fact, however, that through her detention of our ships and cargoes she has interfered greatly with our commerce. She has limited Atlantic transportation facilities by holding dozens of merchantmen idle in her ports. She has disturbed sailing schedules and made uncertain delivery of cargoes, throwing our foreign markets into confusion. Merely offering to pay for all these irregularities is no more satisfactory than Germany's declaration that she may properly sink any American ship carrying contraband, as she sank the Frye, provided she pays for the ship.

We are chiefly concerned, however ,with the big principle at issue. That principle as we see it is that we have just as good a right to trade with European nations in war as in peace, and that Great Britain has no right whatever to interfere with shipments of "innocent" goods bound in either direction.

She may, of course, seize contraband bound for the enemy. She may even, according to precedent we ourselves established in our Civil War, seize contraband en route to a neutral nation, if there is evidence that the ultimate destination of that cargo is the enemy's country. But she may not seize whatever goods she chooses to label contraband when they demonstrably have a neutral destination, for that involves the blockade of a neutral country. And particularly she has no right to seize NON-contraband goods, whether shipped to or from any European port, neutral or enemy.

We have a legal right to ship into Germany, and receive from Germany, any merchandise which Great Britain has not specifically placed on her list of contraband. She has virtually denied us that right. We have a special grievance against her in respect to two things—cotton, for which we need unrestricted access to the foreign market, and dyestuffs, drugs and chemicals as raw material for our industries, which can be obtained only from Germany.

President Lowell of Harvard University assured the last graduating class that the average man reaches his zenith of mental power at the age of twenty-three. It may be all right for the seniors to go forth believing that, but they'll have a mighty hard time persuading the world of it.

The soft answer may turn away wrath, as the Good Books says, but the neutral answer certainly makes a belligerent madder than ever.

SECRECY OF POWERS HALTS OWN PROGRAM FOR STORAGE NAVY

Building Plans for the Coming Year Await Better Information as to Lessons Taught on Sea in Conflict.

WASHINGTON, July 10.—The Naval program to be presented to Congress, in the light of the lessons of the European War, has not been definitely framed notwithstanding the fact that Secretary of the Navy Daniels and his advisors have had the subject under consideration continuously for months.

The building plans for the coming year will not be completed until the last moment, when, probably, President Wilson will say the final word as to the number and type of ships the Navy department will request. Meanwhile Secretary Daniels hopes for more information from the war zone upon which the United States can build with profit and safety.

So far little information has been received to aid the naval constructors. All the belligerents are maintaining the strictest secrecy as to their plans or the lessons they have drawn for themselves from the few sea battles. American naval attaches at London, Paris and Berlin, have had little opportunity to furnish enlightening reports and there have been no foreign observers aboard any of the war fleets at sea.

It is said that the American attache at Berlin has had opportunity to see considerable of the work going on in German yards, but if so he has been under the strictest injunctions not to reveal what he has observed, even in official reports, during the continuance of the war.

The greatest question that has come out of the war is considered by many American naval officers to be the future of the dreadnaught. So far as is known not a single capital ship has been engaged and the value of those enormously expensive fighting machines is still as problematical as it was when England launched the first all-big-gun ship, the Dreadnaught. England's newest super-dreadnaught, the Queen Elizabeth, has bombarded the forts at the Dardanelles; but so far as Navy department advices go, she is the only ship of her class to have fired a shot so far.

The reason for that, navy officers say, is the full realization of predictions made for submarines when the first undersea boat was constructed. Against those small and comparatively inexpensive weapons, no adequate means of defense has been found and the first line ships of the fighting navies are behind mine field or screens of torpedo boats and destroyers leaving the active work of the war to the older pre-dreadnaught battleships, the battle cruisers and lighter and less expensive craft.

When the first manoeuvers of the American navy in which submarines participated took place, some officers declared the day of the battleship had passed. In theory every big ship which approached shore during those operations was destroyed. Events of the European war, so far as they are known, apparently bear out that assumption of the superiority of submarines and that is proving a vexing problem in deciding what shall be the future American policy of naval construction.

Navy engineers now are deeply engaged with experiments looking to the discovery of some practical defence against submarine attack. Should they find a solution of the problem, the big ship program will be vindicated. While nothing has been revealed of their experiments, it is assumed that questions of greater subdivision of hulls and stronger bulkheads, of armor to extend about the midship sections of battleships below the waterline and capable of resisting the blow of a modern torpedo, and also the location of submarines at a considerable distance and their pursuit by swift, light, easily handled craft such as destroyers are being considered. The latter defense is the only practical one which seems to have met with any success abroad, so far as is known, yet officers here point out that at best, it is like searching for a needle in a haystack and that the destroyer defense does not meet the problem in anything like an adequate way.

Location and destruction of submarines by aeroplanes also is considered impractical in any but special cases where weather, depth of water and other conditions make it possible. Bomb dropping from aeroplanes, even over far reaching land fortifications and other easily visible stationary objects has not proven so successful as to give much promise where a small, dimply visible shape beneath the surface of the water is the target.

Similarly, submarine against submarine is not considered a possible development of undersea warfare unless some new and startling device to give submarine commanders the power of underwater vision is discovered. A submarine is a blind thing, once its periscope is below the surface. One of the novel exploits of the war, however, was the sinking of an Italian submarine by an Austrian underwater boat. The reports of the encounter however were not sufficiently complete to indicate the value of that sort of warfare.

The result of the development of the submarine with widening range of action, mounting disappearing guns for surface action, and with increasing numbers of torpedo tubes as shown by reports from Europe, has been to create a school of navy officers here who are said to be urging the abandonment of dreadnaught building in favor of a huge submarine fleet. Other officers declare the backbone of a navy must always be in first line battleships and are urging larger and more heavily armed dreadnaughts than ever. Some place — between these two schools of theory, it is said, the course of the department will lie in its recommendations to Congress.

Officers who advocate the submarine navy say that it is thoroughly practicable for the United States because the mission of the American navy is to defend the United States from invasion, not to prepare the way for an American invasion of any enemy country. That, they declare, has always been the theory of the navy department and accounts for the fact that no great efforts have been made to obtain appropriations for swift battle-cruisers such as those employed by the British and German navies. Lacking a merchant marine to be protected and being a self-contained nation, fully able to support itself with the resources within its own borders, they argue that battle cruisers have not been considered a necessity to the United States navy and the attention has been concentrated upon getting the greatest possible number of heavy battleships, floating fortresses to defend the coasts. That theory, also accounts for the lower speed of American superdreadnaughts it is said, and the greater concentration of gun power in ships of American design compared to similar ships abroad.

With fleets of submarines stationed along both coasts and with navy yards equipped to care for them, those officers argue that even the battleships could be spared from the defense line and that no enemy would dare approach with ships and transports a coast well mined and defended with land guns as well as submarines. The risks would be too great, the chance of overwhelming disaster too many.

It is certain that Congress will be asked to provide liberally in auxiliary ships for the present navy, particularly as to parent ships for submarine flotillas. Navy officers are obtaining all possible data on German and British submarine tenders and may propose the construction of several of those vessels so designed as to be able to raise sunken submarined or even to take aboard and transport for considerable distance several of the little fighting ships. Reports have reached the United States of several such ships in the European navies.

It is also probable that a number of swift scout cruisers will be recommended and that a consistent cruiser program will be proposed designed to give the navy an ample fleet of these ships within a few years. As yet, however, there is nothing to indicate the recommendation of battle cruisers at this time. The department, it is intimated, probably will content itself with laying before Congress a full presentation of the arguments for and against that type.

Will of Mrs. Hannah M. Currier, widow of former Gov. Currier of New Hampshire, leaves nearly $1,000,000 to establish an institution in Manchester, N. H.